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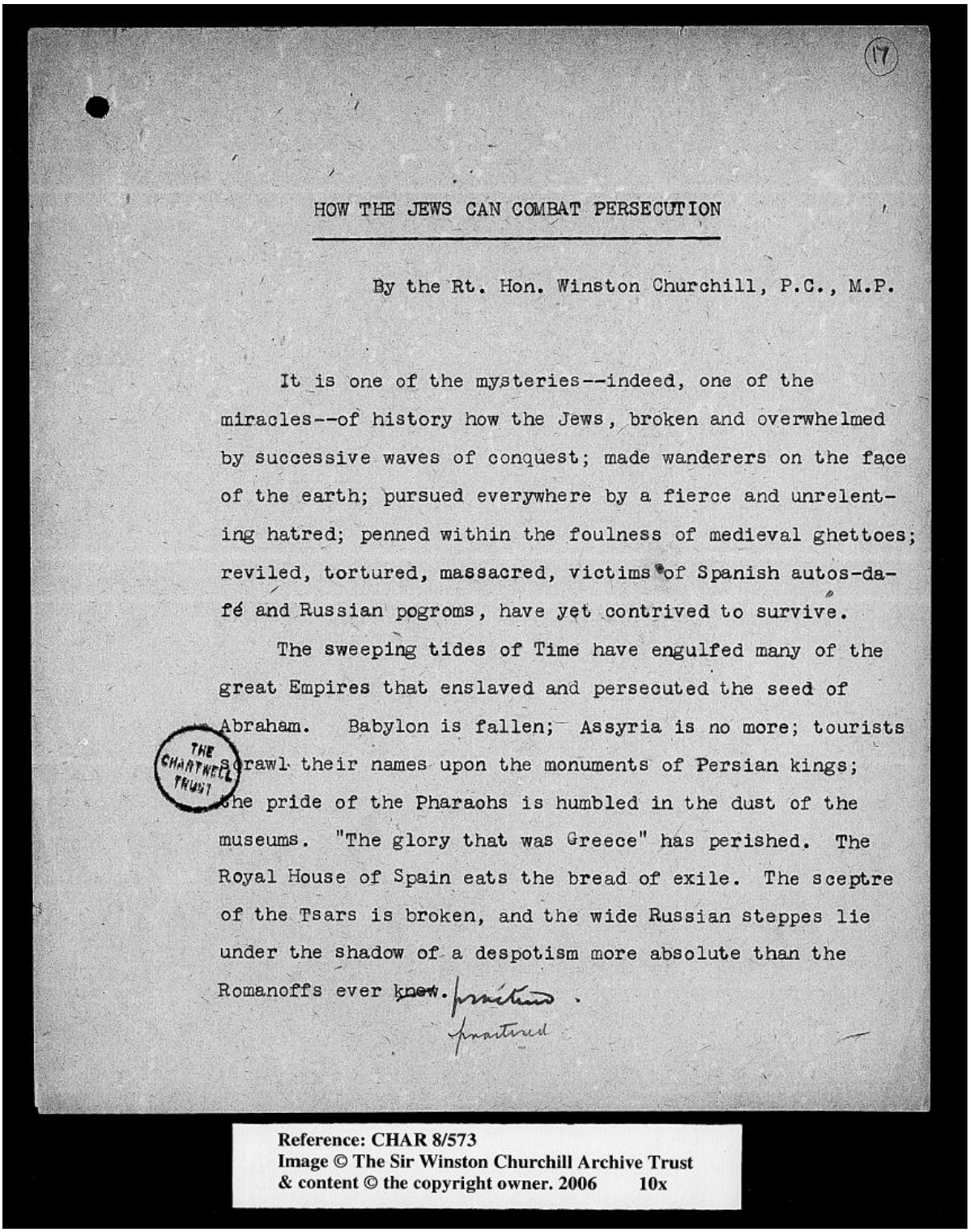

(17)

HOW THE JEWS CAN COMBAT PERSECUTION

By the Rt. Hon. Winston Churchill, P.C., M.P.

It is one of the mysteries--indeed, one of the miracles--of history how the Jews, broken and overwhelmed by successive waves of conquest; made wanderers on the face of the earth; pursued everywhere by a fierce and unrelenting hatred; penned within the foulness of medieval ghettoes; reviled, tortured, massacred, victims of Spanish autos-da-fé and Russian pogroms, have yet contrived to survive.

The sweeping tides of Time have engulfed many of the great Empires that enslaved and persecuted the seed of Abraham. Babylon is fallen; Assyria is no more; tourists scrawl their names upon the monuments of Persian kings; the pride of the Pharaohs is humbled in the dust of the museums. "The glory that was Greece" has perished. The Royal House of Spain eats the bread of exile. The sceptre of the Tsars is broken, and the wide Russian steppes lie under the shadow of a despotism more absolute than the Romanoffs ever ~~knew~~. practised.

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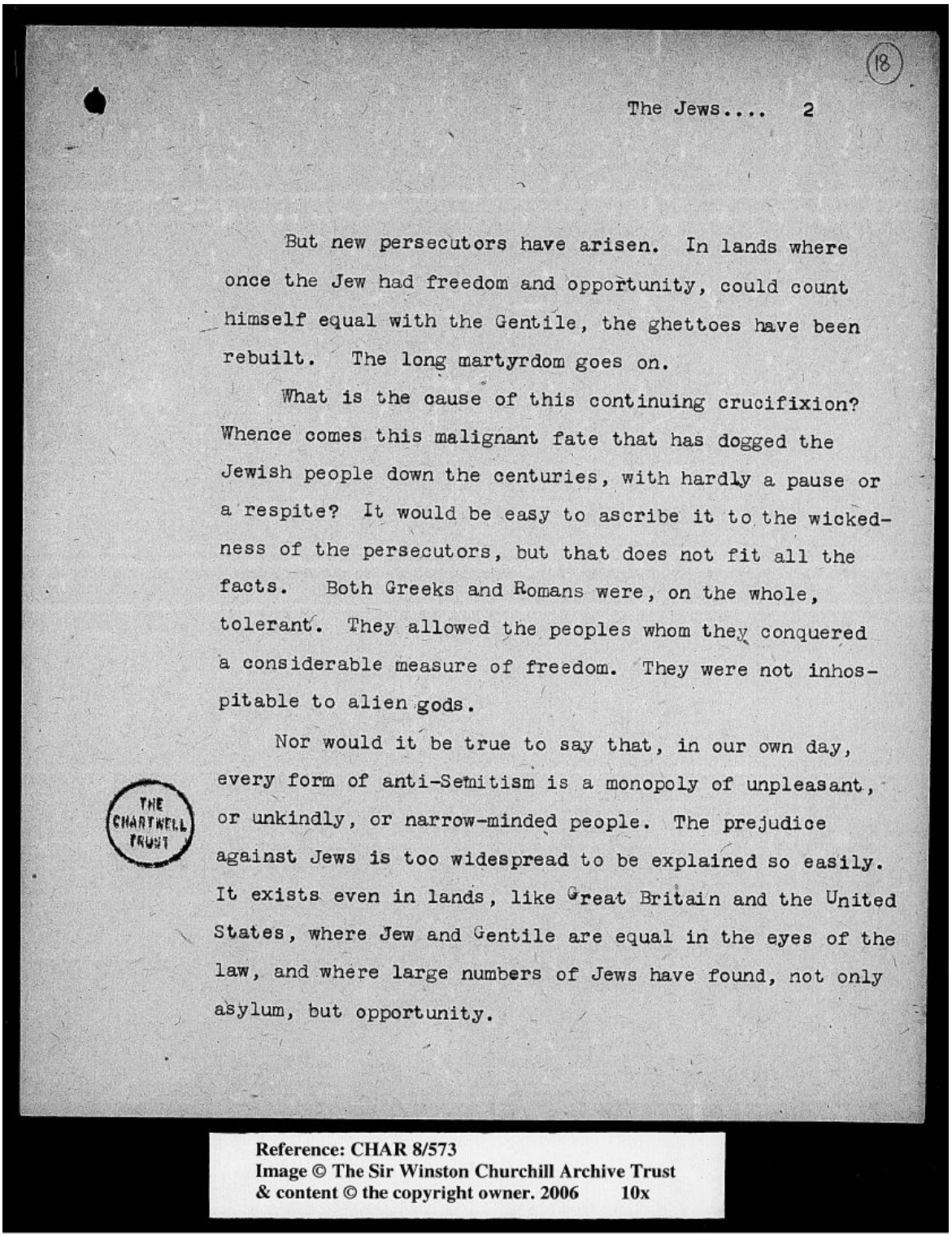

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The Jews.... 2

But new persecutors have arisen. In lands where once the Jew had freedom and opportunity, could count himself equal with the Gentile, the ghettoes have been rebuilt. The long martyrdom goes on.

What is the cause of this continuing crucifixion? Whence comes this malignant fate that has dogged the Jewish people down the centuries, with hardly a pause or a respite? It would be easy to ascribe it to the wickedness of the persecutors, but that does not fit all the facts. Both Greeks and Romans were, on the whole, tolerant. They allowed the peoples whom they conquered a considerable measure of freedom. They were not inhospitable to alien gods.

Nor would it be true to say that, in our own day, every form of anti-Semitism is a monopoly of unpleasant, or unkindly, or narrow-minded people. The prejudice against Jews is too widespread to be explained so easily. It exists even in lands, like Great Britain and the United States, where Jew and Gentile are equal in the eyes of the law, and where large numbers of Jews have found, not only asylum, but opportunity.

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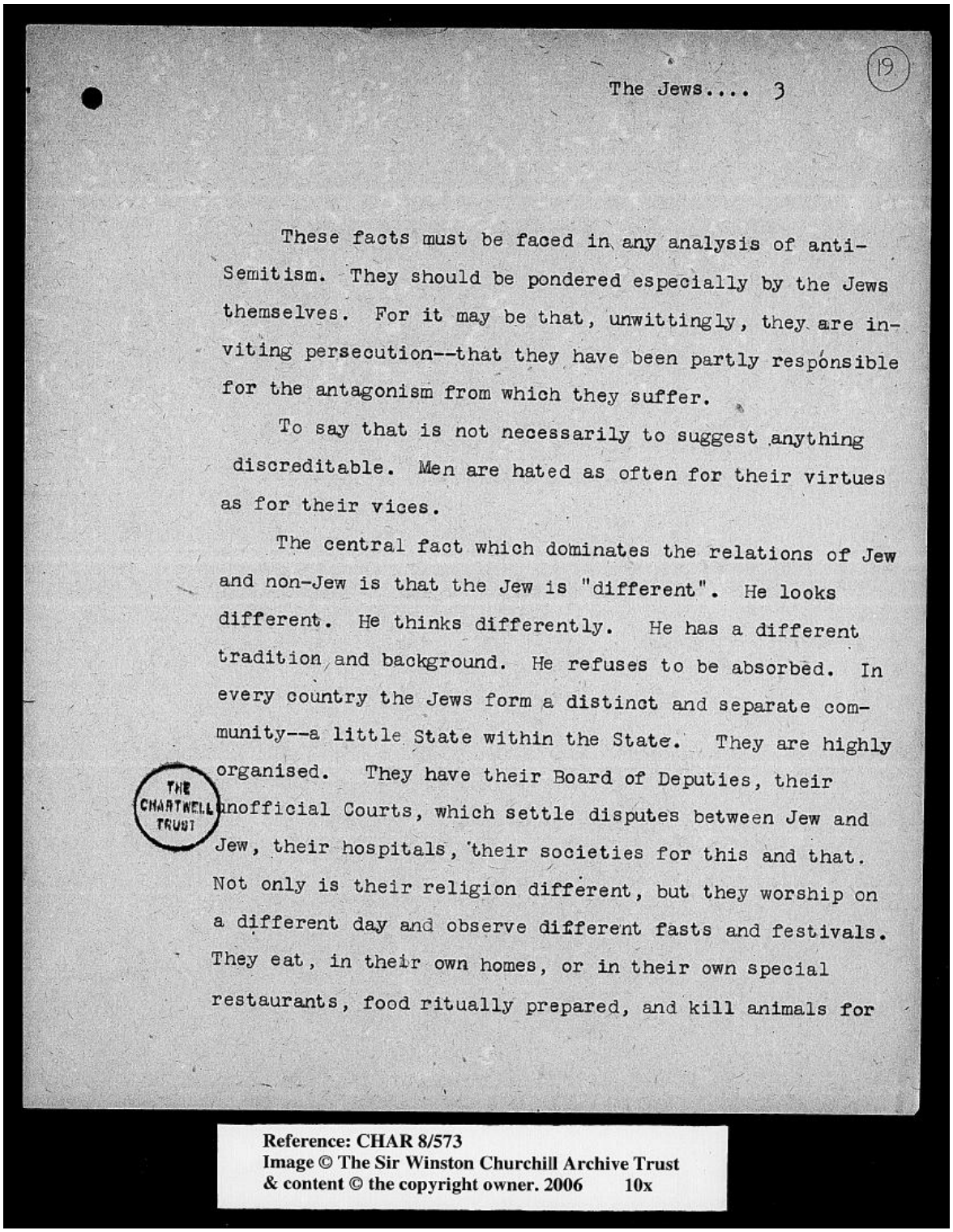

The Jews.... 3

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These facts must be faced in any analysis of anti-Semitism. They should be pondered especially by the Jews themselves. For it may be that, unwittingly, they are inviting persecution--that they have been partly responsible for the antagonism from which they suffer.

To say that is not necessarily to suggest anything discreditable. Men are hated as often for their virtues as for their vices.

The central fact which dominates the relations of Jew and non-Jew is that the Jew is "different". He looks different. He thinks differently. He has a different tradition and background. He refuses to be absorbed. In every country the Jews form a distinct and separate community--a little State within the State. They are highly organised. They have their Board of Deputies, their unofficial Courts, which settle disputes between Jew and Jew, their hospitals, their societies for this and that. Not only is their religion different, but they worship on a different day and observe different fasts and festivals. They eat, in their own homes, or in their own special restaurants, food ritually prepared, and kill animals for

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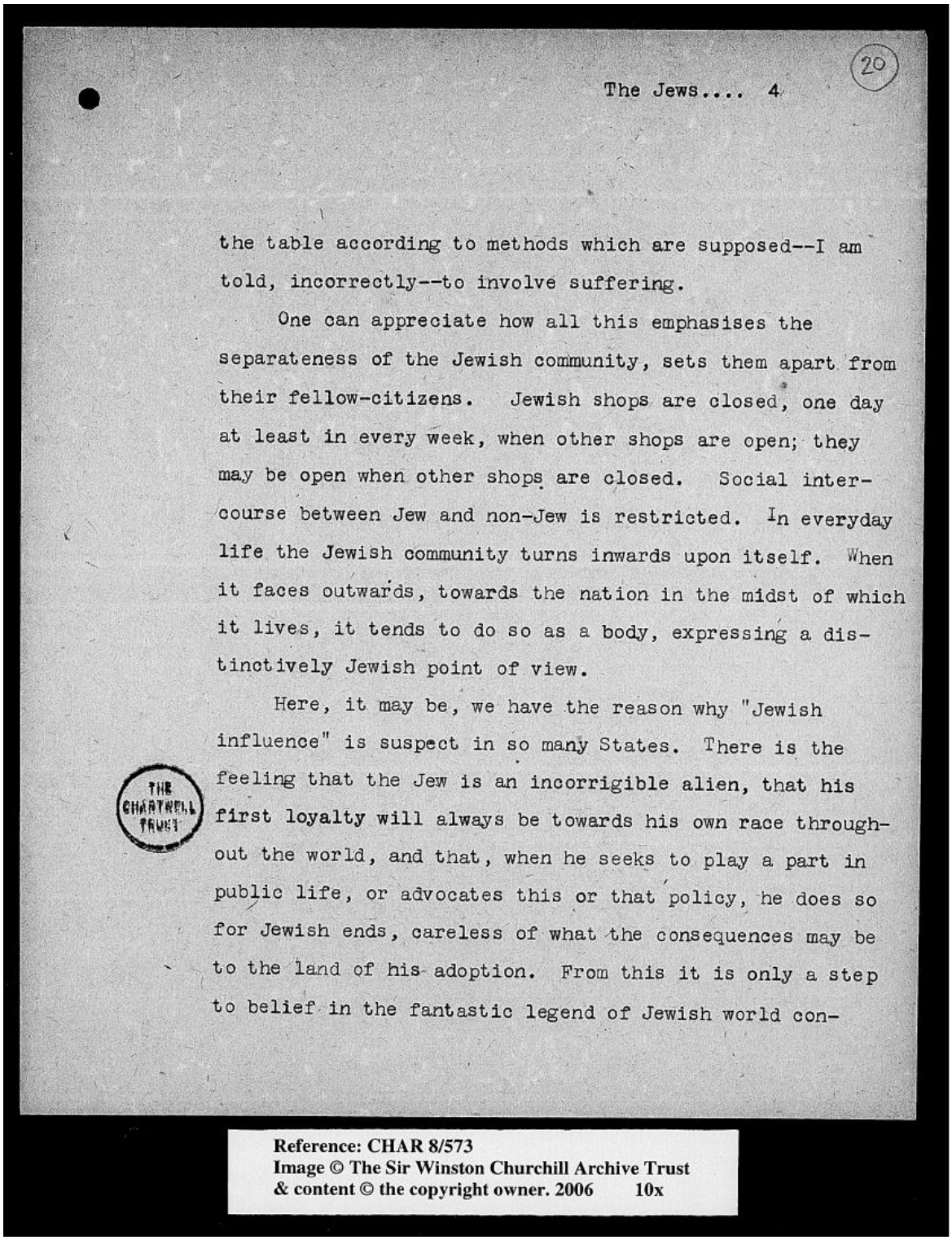

The Jews.... 4

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the table according to methods which are supposed--I am told, incorrectly--to involve suffering.

One can appreciate how all this emphasises the separateness of the Jewish community, sets them apart from their fellow-citizens. Jewish shops are closed, one day at least in every week, when other shops are open; they may be open when other shops are closed. Social intercourse between Jew and non-Jew is restricted. In everyday life the Jewish community turns inwards upon itself. When it faces outwards, towards the nation in the midst of which it lives, it tends to do so as a body, expressing a distinctively Jewish point of view.

Here, it may be, we have the reason why "Jewish influence" is suspect in so many States. There is the feeling that the Jew is an incorrigible alien, that his first loyalty will always be towards his own race throughout the world, and that, when he seeks to play a part in public life, or advocates this or that policy, he does so for Jewish ends, careless of what the consequences may be to the land of his adoption. From this it is only a step to belief in the fantastic legend of Jewish world con-

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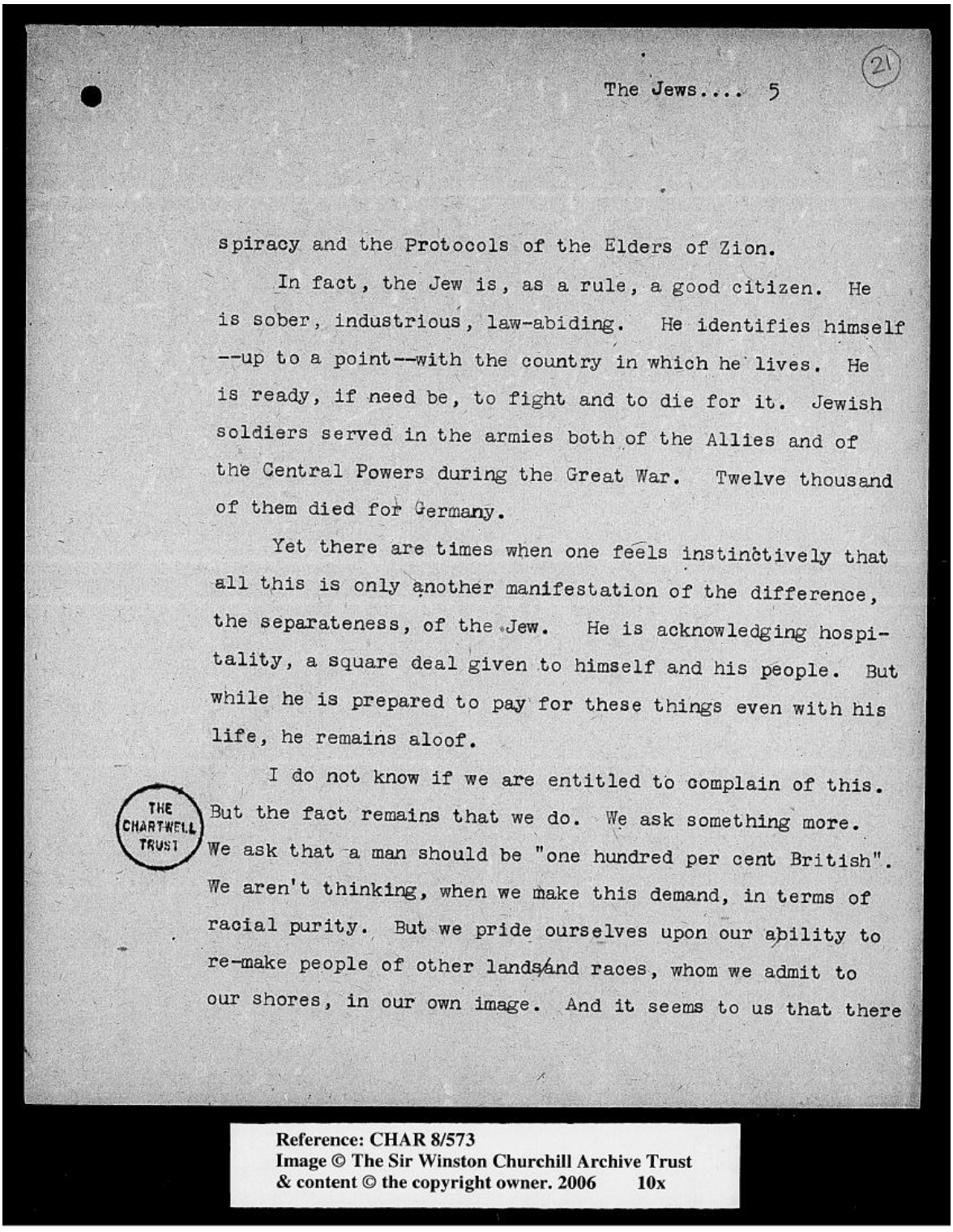

spiracy and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion.

In fact, the Jew is, as a rule, a good citizen. He is sober, industrious, law-abiding. He identifies himself --up to a point--with the country in which he lives. He is ready, if need be, to fight and to die for it. Jewish soldiers served in the armies both of the Allies and of the Central Powers during the Great War. Twelve thousand of them died for Germany.

Yet there are times when one feels instinctively that all this is only another manifestation of the difference, the separateness, of the Jew. He is acknowledging hospitality, a square deal given to himself and his people. But while he is prepared to pay for these things even with his life, he remains aloof.

I do not know if we are entitled to complain of this. But the fact remains that we do. We ask something more. We ask that a man should be "one hundred per cent British". We aren't thinking, when we make this demand, in terms of racial purity. But we pride ourselves upon our ability to re-make people of other lands and races, whom we admit to our shores, in our own image. And it seems to us that there

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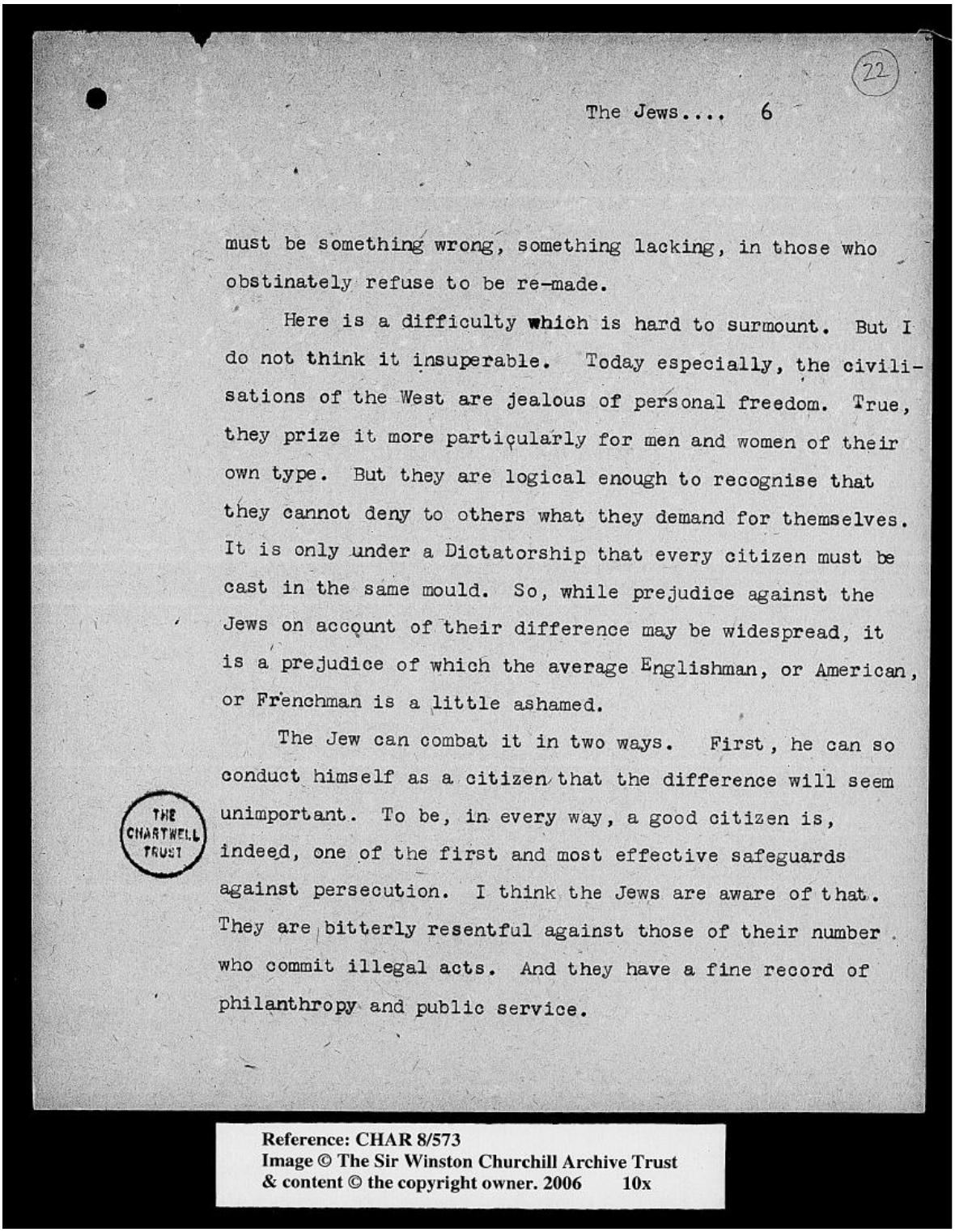

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The Jews.... 6

must be something wrong, something lacking, in those who obstinately refuse to be re-made.

Here is a difficulty which is hard to surmount. But I do not think it insuperable. Today especially, the civilisations of the West are jealous of personal freedom. True, they prize it more particularly for men and women of their own type. But they are logical enough to recognise that they cannot deny to others what they demand for themselves. It is only under a Dictatorship that every citizen must be cast in the same mould. So, while prejudice against the Jews on account of their difference may be widespread, it is a prejudice of which the average Englishman, or American, or Frenchman is a little ashamed.

The Jew can combat it in two ways. First, he can so conduct himself as a citizen that the difference will seem unimportant. To be, in every way, a good citizen is, indeed, one of the first and most effective safeguards against persecution. I think the Jews are aware of that. They are bitterly resentful against those of their number who commit illegal acts. And they have a fine record of philanthropy and public service.

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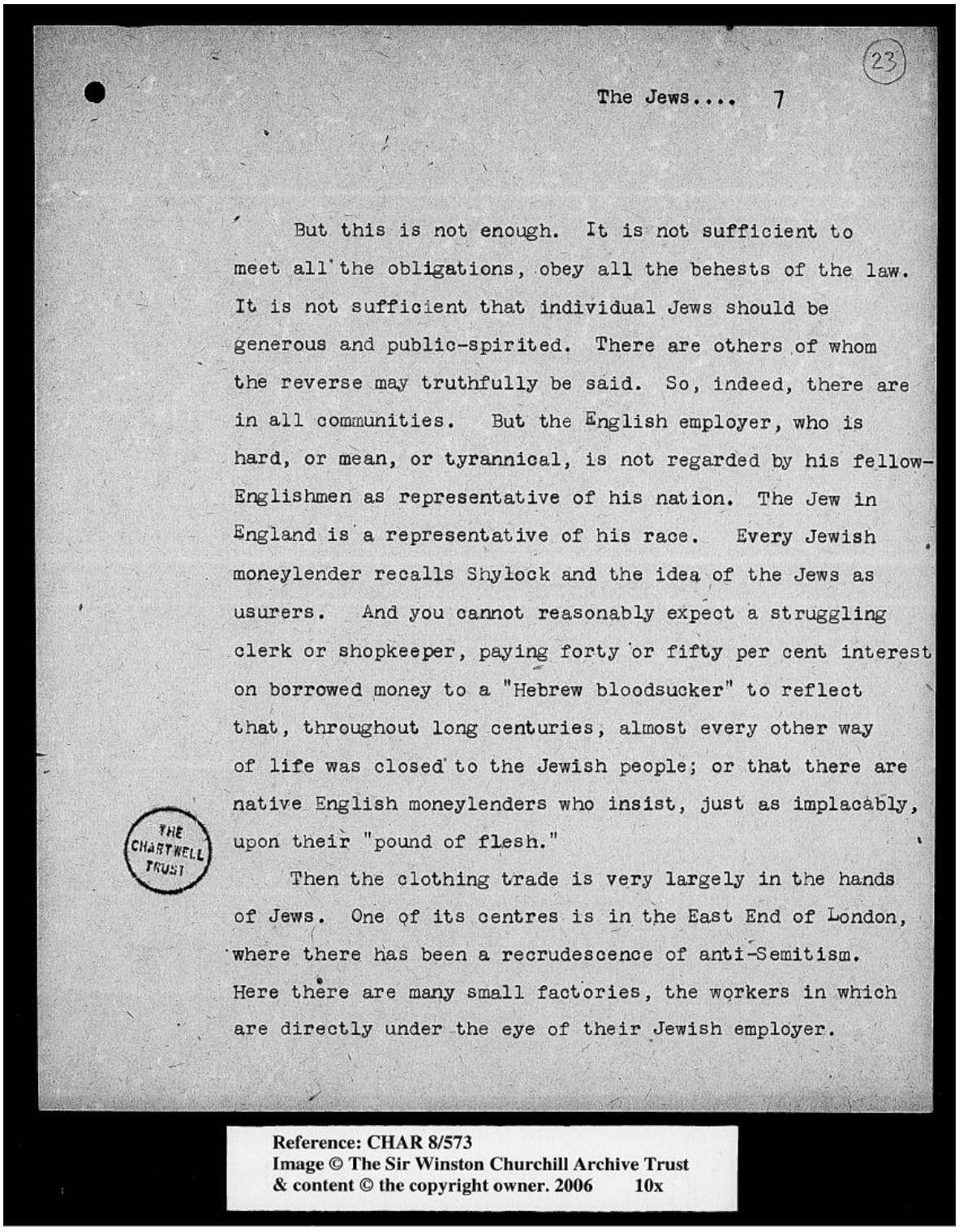

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The Jews.... 7

But this is not enough. It is not sufficient to meet all the obligations, obey all the behests of the law. It is not sufficient that individual Jews should be generous and public-spirited. There are others of whom the reverse may truthfully be said. So, indeed, there are in all communities. But the English employer, who is hard, or mean, or tyrannical, is not regarded by his fellow-Englishmen as representative of his nation. The Jew in England is a representative of his race. Every Jewish moneylender recalls Shylock and the idea of the Jews as usurers. And you cannot reasonably expect a struggling clerk or shopkeeper, paying forty or fifty per cent interest on borrowed money to a "Hebrew bloodsucker" to reflect that, throughout long centuries, almost every other way of life was closed to the Jewish people; or that there are native English moneylenders who insist, just as implacably, upon their "pound of flesh."

Then the clothing trade is very largely in the hands of Jews. One of its centres is in the East End of London, where there has been a recrudescence of anti-Semitism. Here there are many small factories, the workers in which are directly under the eye of their Jewish employer.

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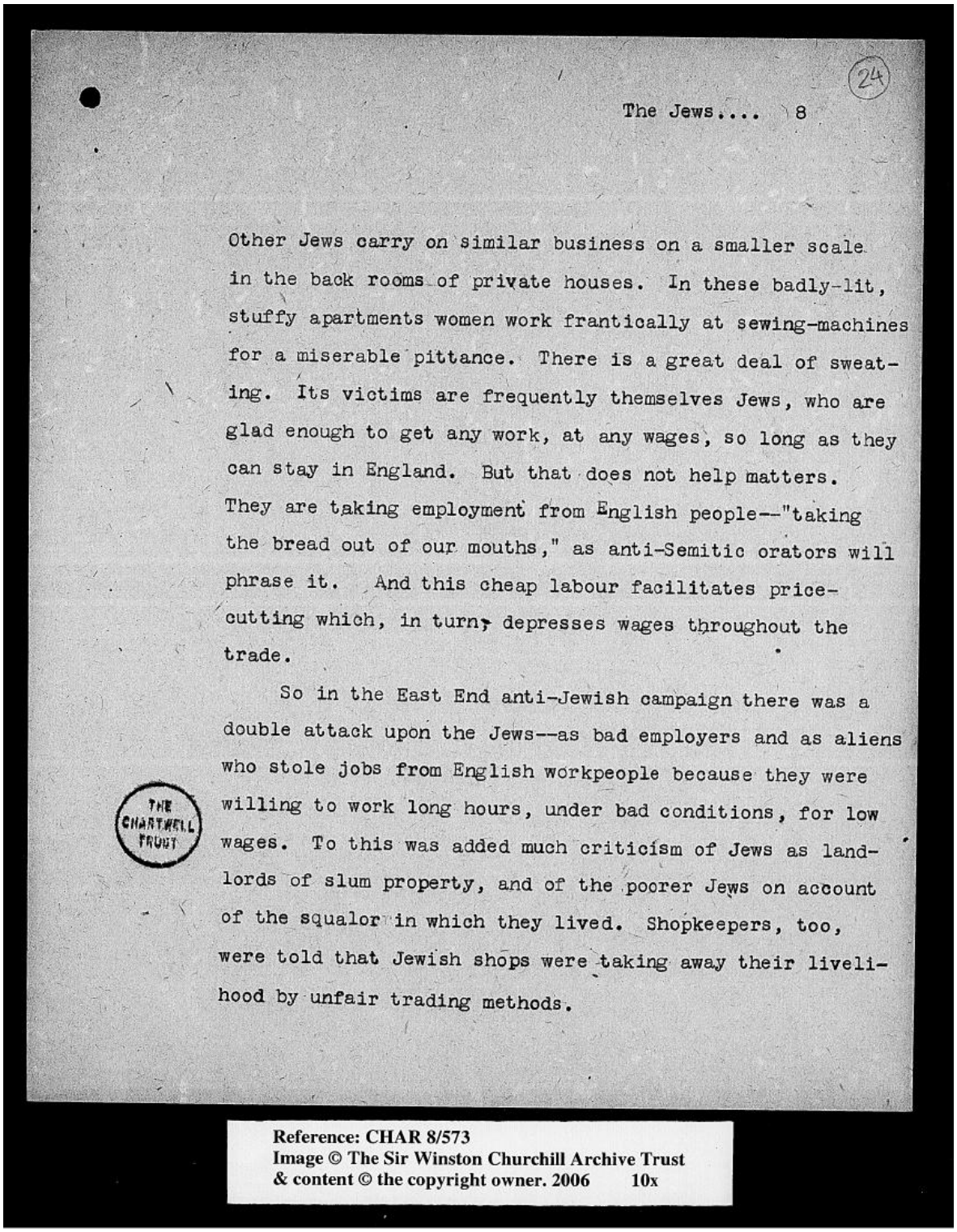

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The Jews.... 8

Other Jews carry on similar business on a smaller scale in the back rooms of private houses. In these badly-lit, stuffy apartments women work frantically at sewing-machines for a miserable pittance. There is a great deal of sweating. Its victims are frequently themselves Jews, who are glad enough to get any work, at any wages, so long as they can stay in England. But that does not help matters. They are taking employment from English people--"taking the bread out of our mouths," as anti-Semitic orators will phrase it. And this cheap labour facilitates price-cutting which, in turn, depresses wages throughout the trade.

So in the East End anti-Jewish campaign there was a double attack upon the Jews--as bad employers and as aliens who stole jobs from English workpeople because they were willing to work long hours, under bad conditions, for low wages. To this was added much criticism of Jews as landlords of slum property, and of the poorer Jews on account of the squalor in which they lived. Shopkeepers, too, were told that Jewish shops were taking away their livelihood by unfair trading methods.

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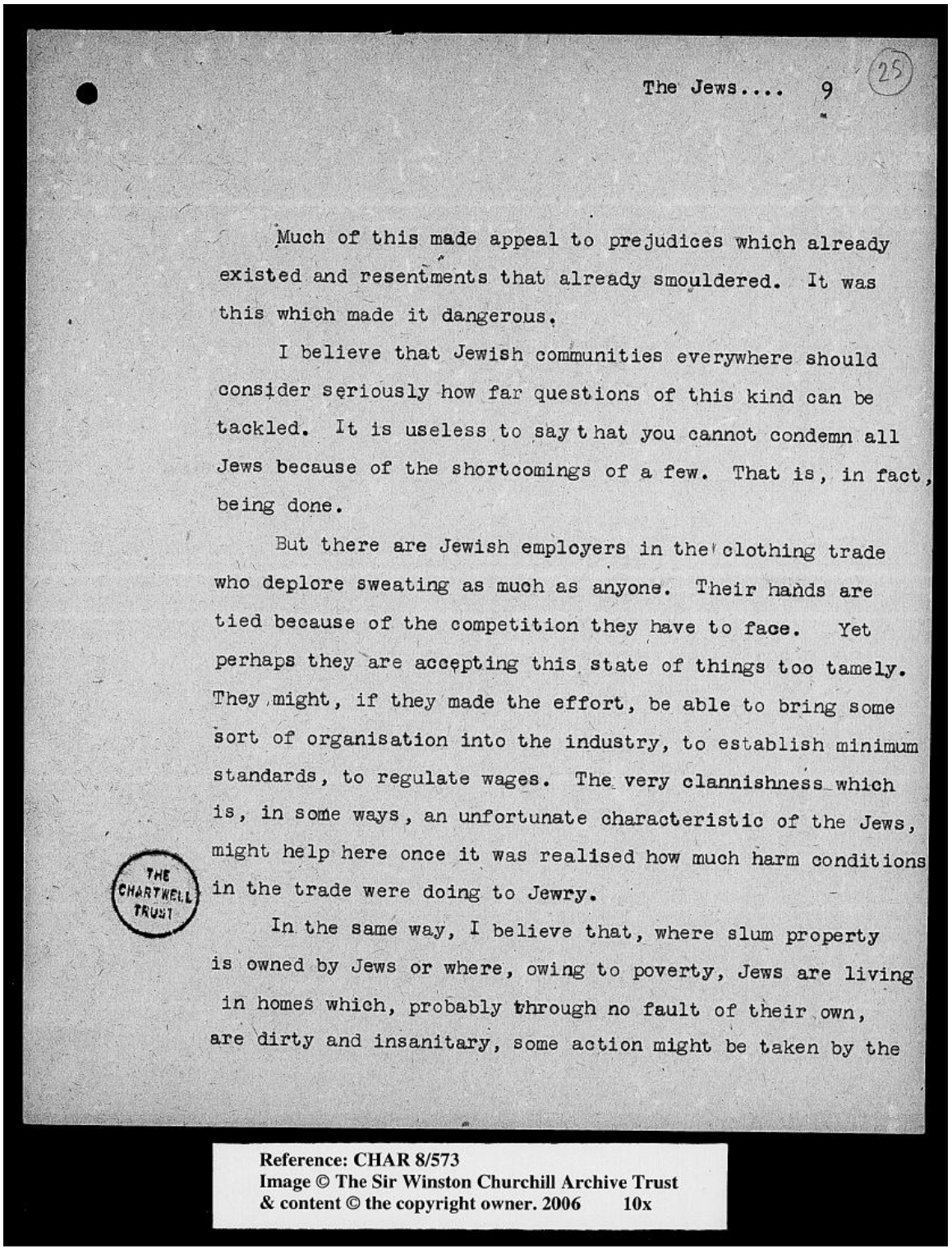

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Much of this made appeal to prejudices which already existed and resentments that already smouldered. It was this which made it dangerous.

I believe that Jewish communities everywhere should consider seriously how far questions of this kind can be tackled. It is useless to say that you cannot condemn all Jews because of the shortcomings of a few. That is, in fact, being done.

But there are Jewish employers in the clothing trade who deplore sweating as much as anyone. Their hands are tied because of the competition they have to face. Yet perhaps they are accepting this state of things too tamely. They might, if they made the effort, be able to bring some sort of organisation into the industry, to establish minimum standards, to regulate wages. The very clannishness which is, in some ways, an unfortunate characteristic of the Jews, might help here once it was realised how much harm conditions in the trade were doing to Jewry.

In the same way, I believe that, where slum property is owned by Jews or where, owing to poverty, Jews are living in homes which, probably through no fault of their own, are dirty and insanitary, some action might be taken by the

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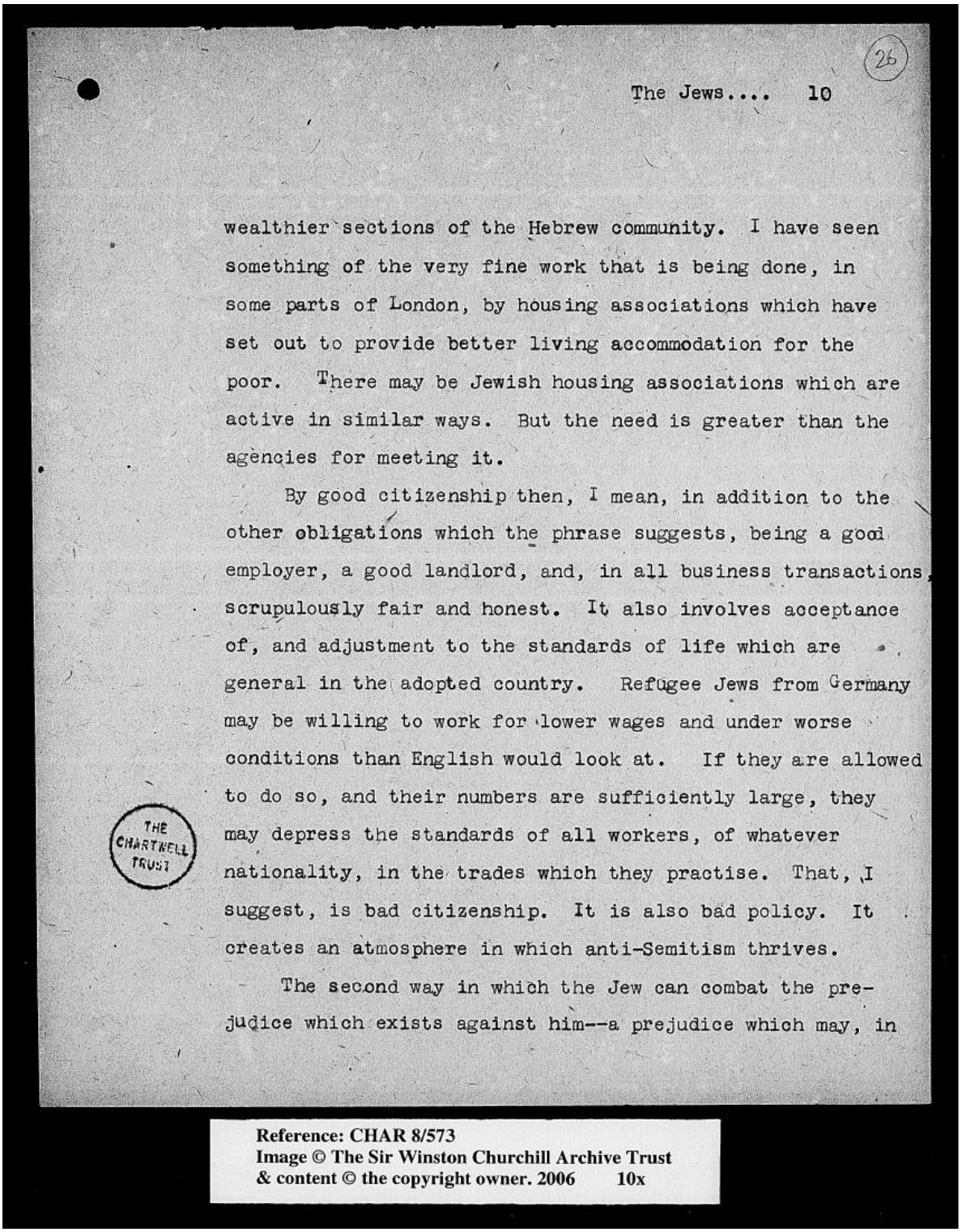

wealthier sections of the Hebrew community. I have seen something of the very fine work that is being done, in some parts of London, by housing associations which have set out to provide better living accommodation for the poor. There may be Jewish housing associations which are active in similar ways. But the need is greater than the agencies for meeting it.

By good citizenship then, I mean, in addition to the other obligations which the phrase suggests, being a good employer, a good landlord, and, in all business transactions, scrupulously fair and honest. It also involves acceptance of, and adjustment to the standards of life which are general in the adopted country. Refugee Jews from Germany may be willing to work for lower wages and under worse conditions than English would look at. If they are allowed to do so, and their numbers are sufficiently large, they may depress the standards of all workers, of whatever nationality, in the trades which they practise. That, I suggest, is bad citizenship. It is also bad policy. It creates an atmosphere in which anti-Semitism thrives.

The second way in which the Jew can combat the prejudice which exists against him--a prejudice which may, in

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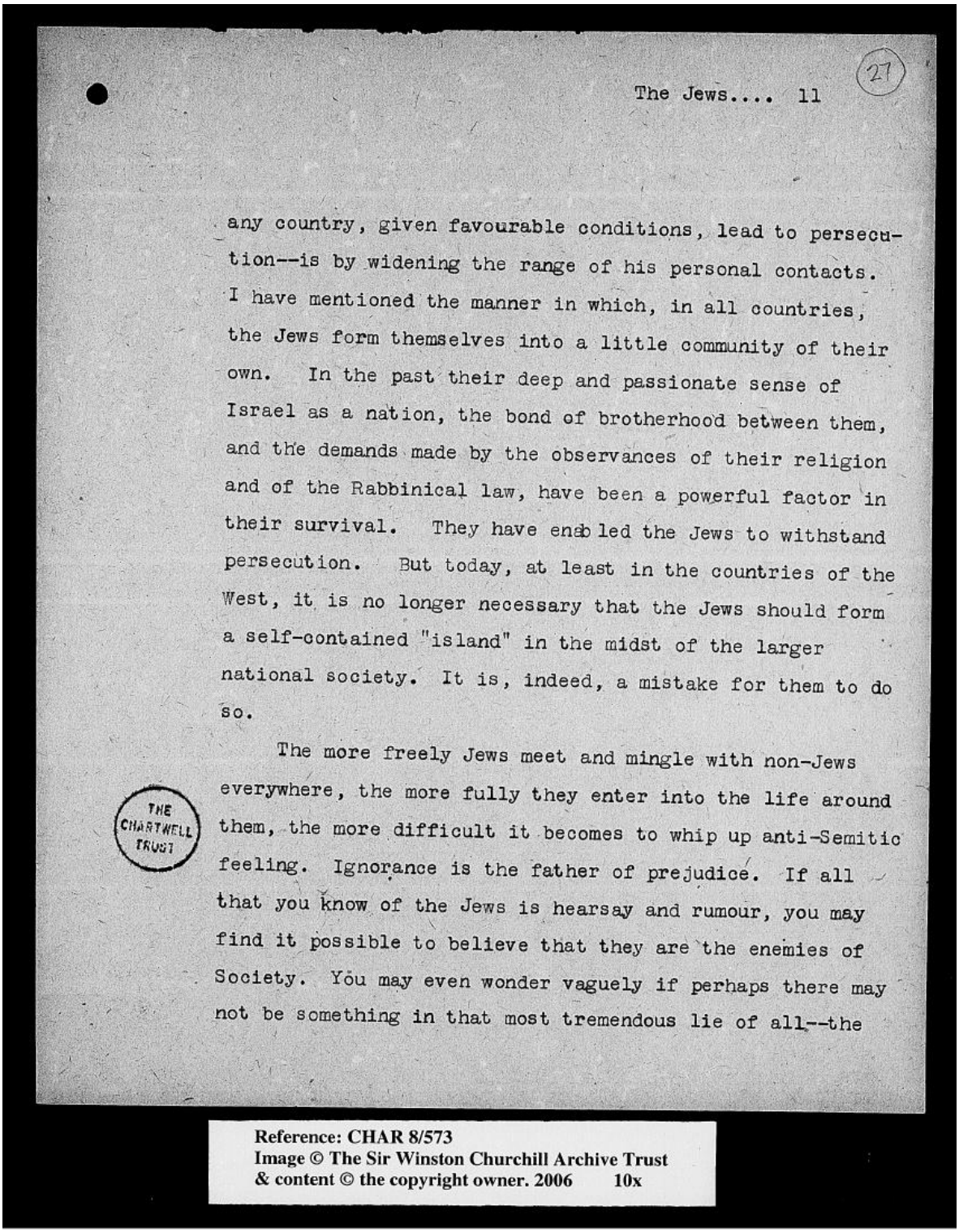

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any country, given favourable conditions, lead to persecution--is by widening the range of his personal contacts. I have mentioned the manner in which, in all countries, the Jews form themselves into a little community of their own. In the past their deep and passionate sense of Israel as a nation, the bond of brotherhood between them, and the demands made by the observances of their religion and of the Rabbinical law, have been a powerful factor in their survival. They have enabled the Jews to withstand persecution. But today, at least in the countries of the West, it is no longer necessary that the Jews should form a self-contained "island" in the midst of the larger national society. It is, indeed, a mistake for them to do so.

The more freely Jews meet and mingle with non-Jews everywhere, the more fully they enter into the life around them, the more difficult it becomes to whip up anti-Semitic feeling. Ignorance is the father of prejudice. If all that you know of the Jews is hearsay and rumour, you may find it possible to believe that they are the enemies of Society. You may even wonder vaguely if perhaps there may not be something in that most tremendous lie of all--the

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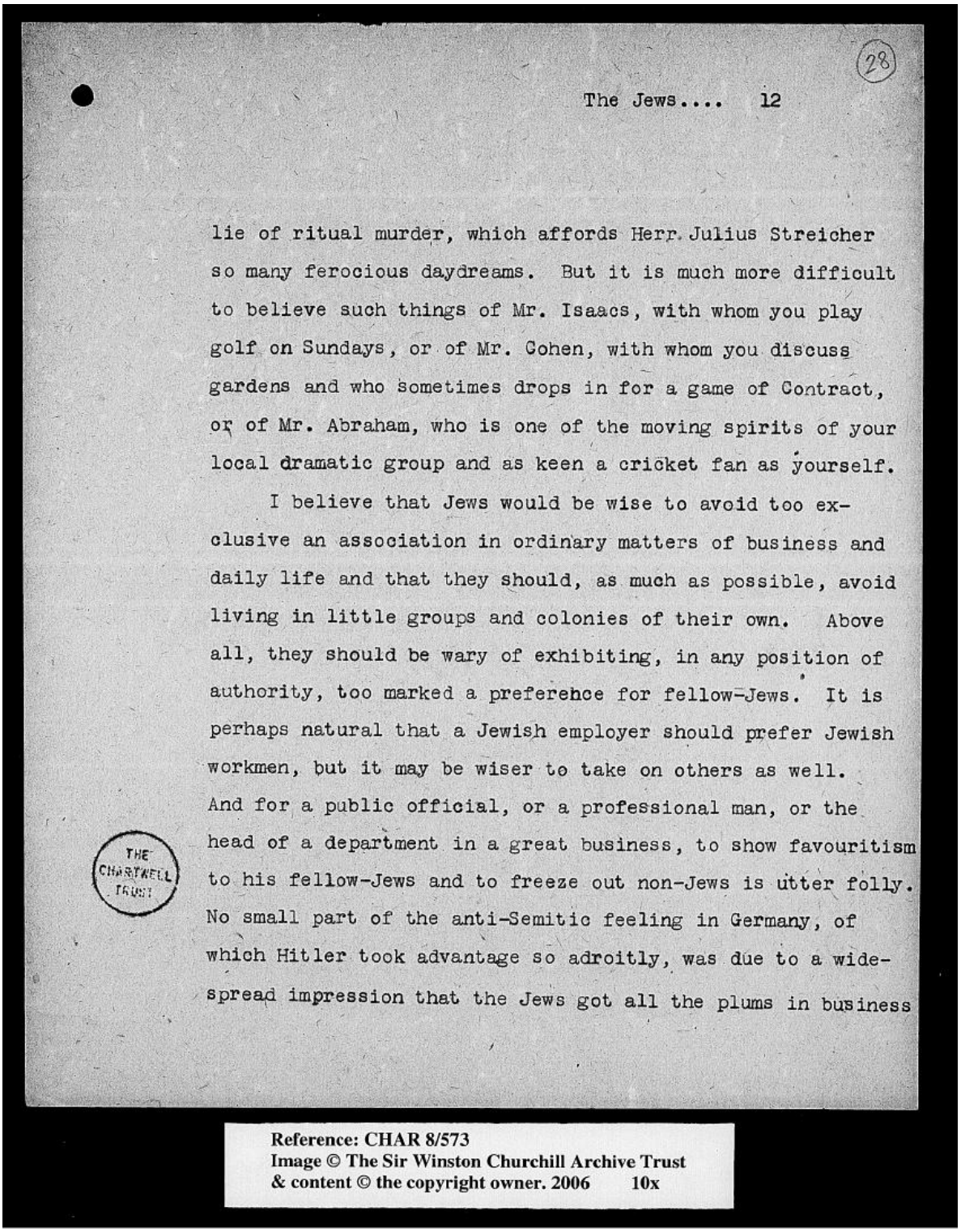

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The Jews.... 12

lie of ritual murder, which affords Herr Julius Streicher so many ferocious daydreams. But it is much more difficult to believe such things of Mr. Isaacs, with whom you play golf on Sundays, or of Mr. Cohen, with whom you discuss gardens and who sometimes drops in for a game of Contract, or of Mr. Abraham, who is one of the moving spirits of your local dramatic group and as keen a cricket fan as yourself.

I believe that Jews would be wise to avoid too exclusive an association in ordinary matters of business and daily life and that they should, as much as possible, avoid living in little groups and colonies of their own. Above all, they should be wary of exhibiting, in any position of authority, too marked a preference for fellow-Jews. It is perhaps natural that a Jewish employer should prefer Jewish workmen, but it may be wiser to take on others as well. And for a public official, or a professional man, or the head of a department in a great business, to show favouritism to his fellow-Jews and to freeze out non-Jews is utter folly. No small part of the anti-Semitic feeling in Germany, of which Hitler took advantage so adroitly, was due to a widespread impression that the Jews got all the plums in business

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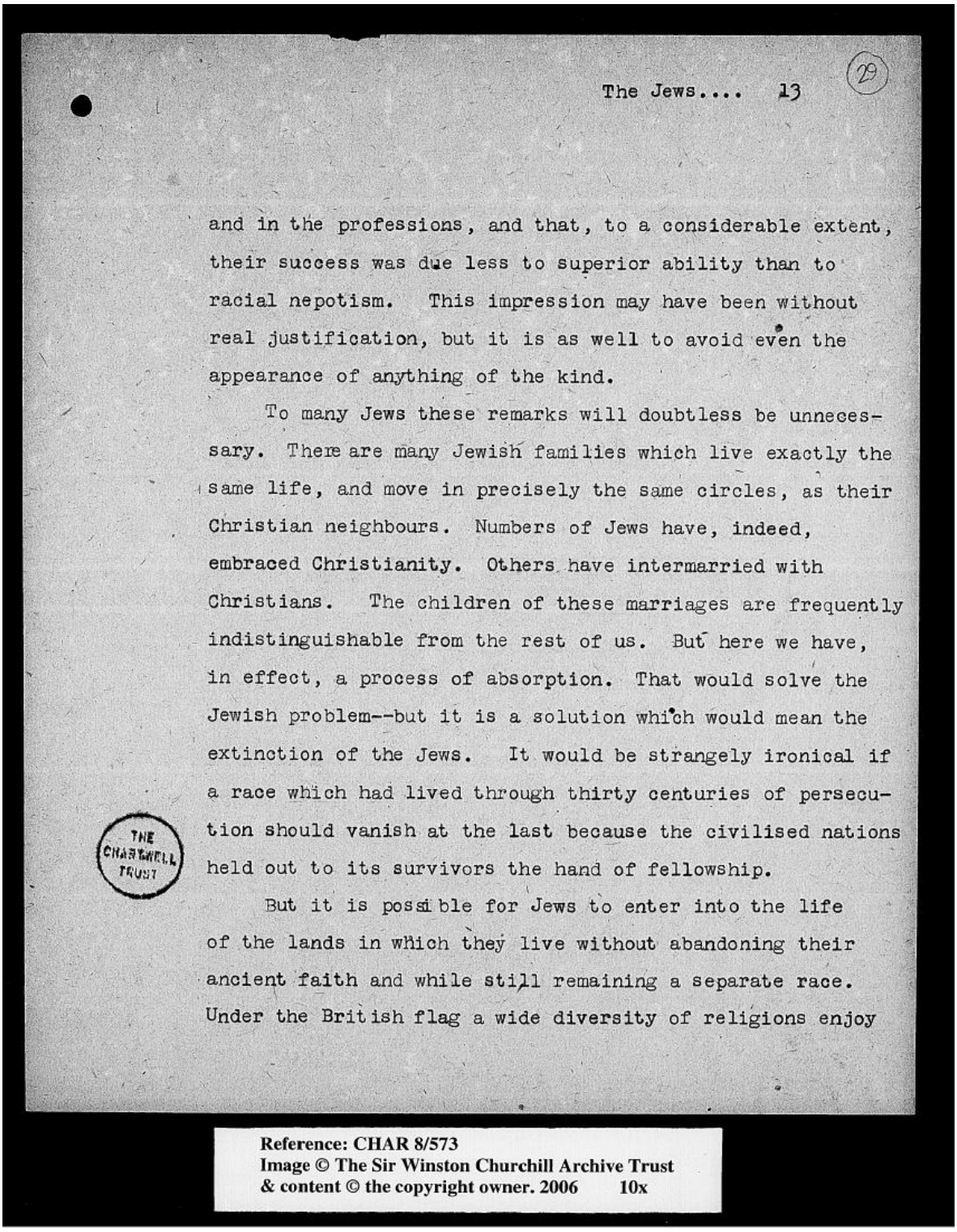

The Jews.... 13

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and in the professions, and that, to a considerable extent, their success was due less to superior ability than to racial nepotism. This impression may have been without real justification, but it is as well to avoid even the appearance of anything of the kind.

To many Jews these remarks will doubtless be unnecessary. There are many Jewish families which live exactly the same life, and move in precisely the same circles, as their Christian neighbours. Numbers of Jews have, indeed, embraced Christianity. Others have intermarried with Christians. The children of these marriages are frequently indistinguishable from the rest of us. But here we have, in effect, a process of absorption. That would solve the Jewish problem--but it is a solution which would mean the extinction of the Jews. It would be strangely ironical if a race which had lived through thirty centuries of persecution should vanish at the last because the civilised nations held out to its survivors the hand of fellowship.

But it is possible for Jews to enter into the life of the lands in which they live without abandoning their ancient faith and while still remaining a separate race. Under the British flag a wide diversity of religions enjoy

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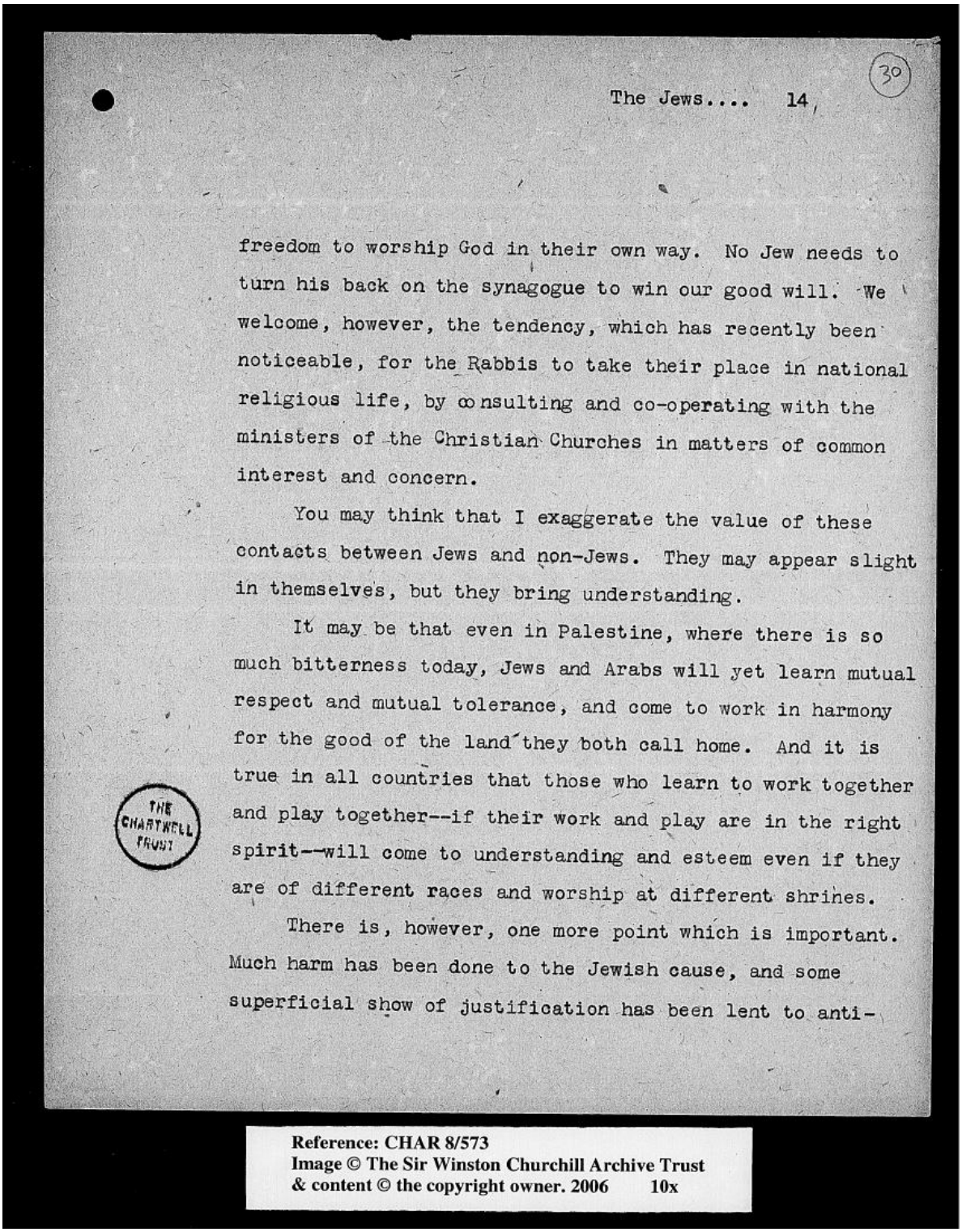

The Jews.... 14,

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freedom to worship God in their own way. No Jew needs to turn his back on the synagogue to win our good will. We welcome, however, the tendency, which has recently been noticeable, for the Rabbis to take their place in national religious life, by consulting and co-operating with the ministers of the Christian Churches in matters of common interest and concern.

You may think that I exaggerate the value of these contacts between Jews and non-Jews. They may appear slight in themselves, but they bring understanding.

It may be that even in Palestine, where there is so much bitterness today, Jews and Arabs will yet learn mutual respect and mutual tolerance, and come to work in harmony for the good of the land they both call home. And it is true in all countries that those who learn to work together and play together--if their work and play are in the right spirit--will come to understanding and esteem even if they are of different races and worship at different shrines.

There is, however, one more point which is important. Much harm has been done to the Jewish cause, and some superficial show of justification has been lent to anti-

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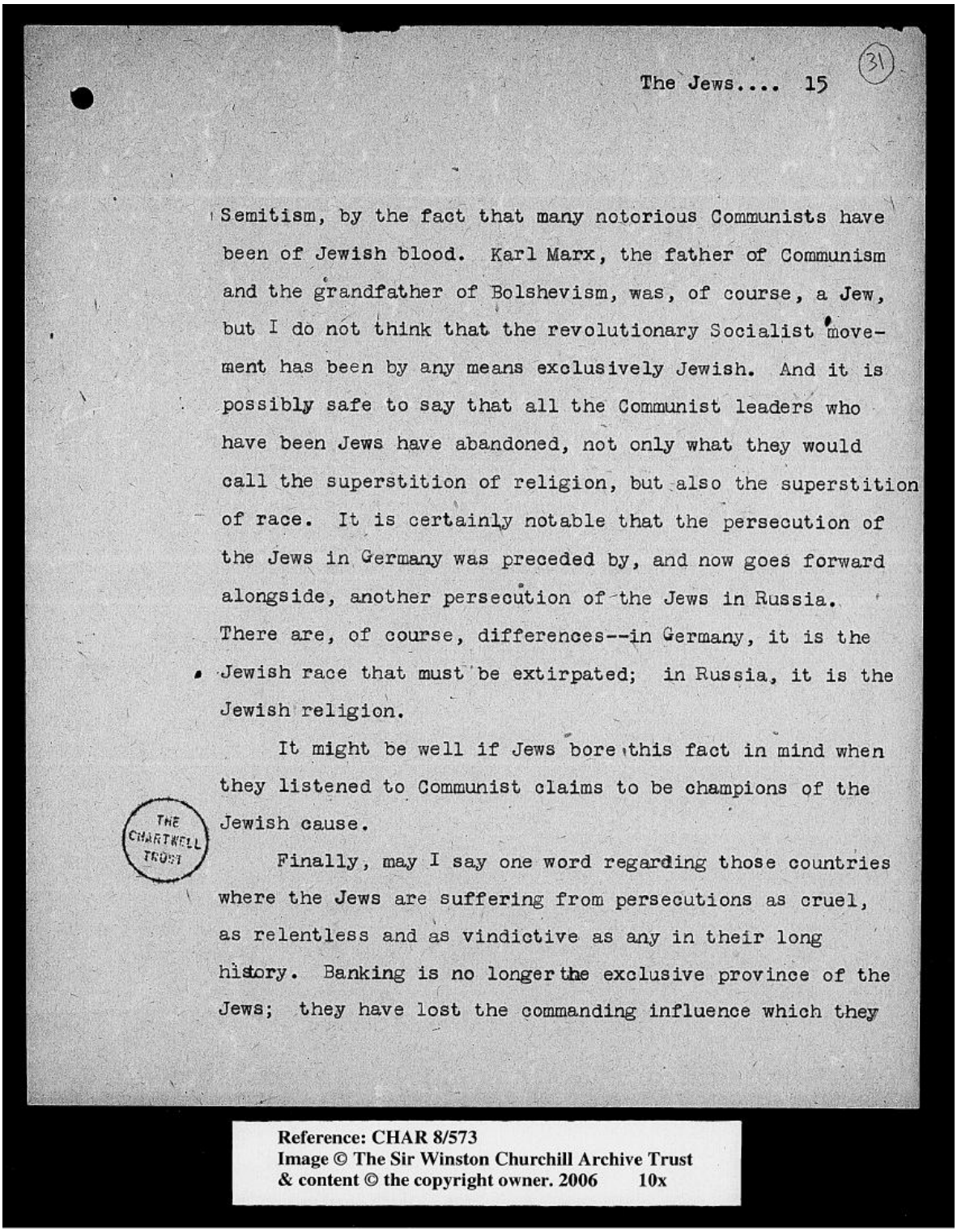

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Semitism, by the fact that many notorious Communists have been of Jewish blood. Karl Marx, the father of Communism and the grandfather of Bolshevism, was, of course, a Jew, but I do not think that the revolutionary Socialist movement has been by any means exclusively Jewish. And it is possibly safe to say that all the Communist leaders who have been Jews have abandoned, not only what they would call the superstition of religion, but also the superstition of race. It is certainly notable that the persecution of the Jews in Germany was preceded by, and now goes forward alongside, another persecution of the Jews in Russia. There are, of course, differences--in Germany, it is the Jewish race that must be extirpated; in Russia, it is the Jewish religion.

It might be well if Jews bore this fact in mind when they listened to Communist claims to be champions of the Jewish cause.

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Finally, may I say one word regarding those countries where the Jews are suffering from persecutions as cruel, as relentless and as vindictive as any in their long history. Banking is no longer the exclusive province of the Jews; they have lost the commanding influence which they

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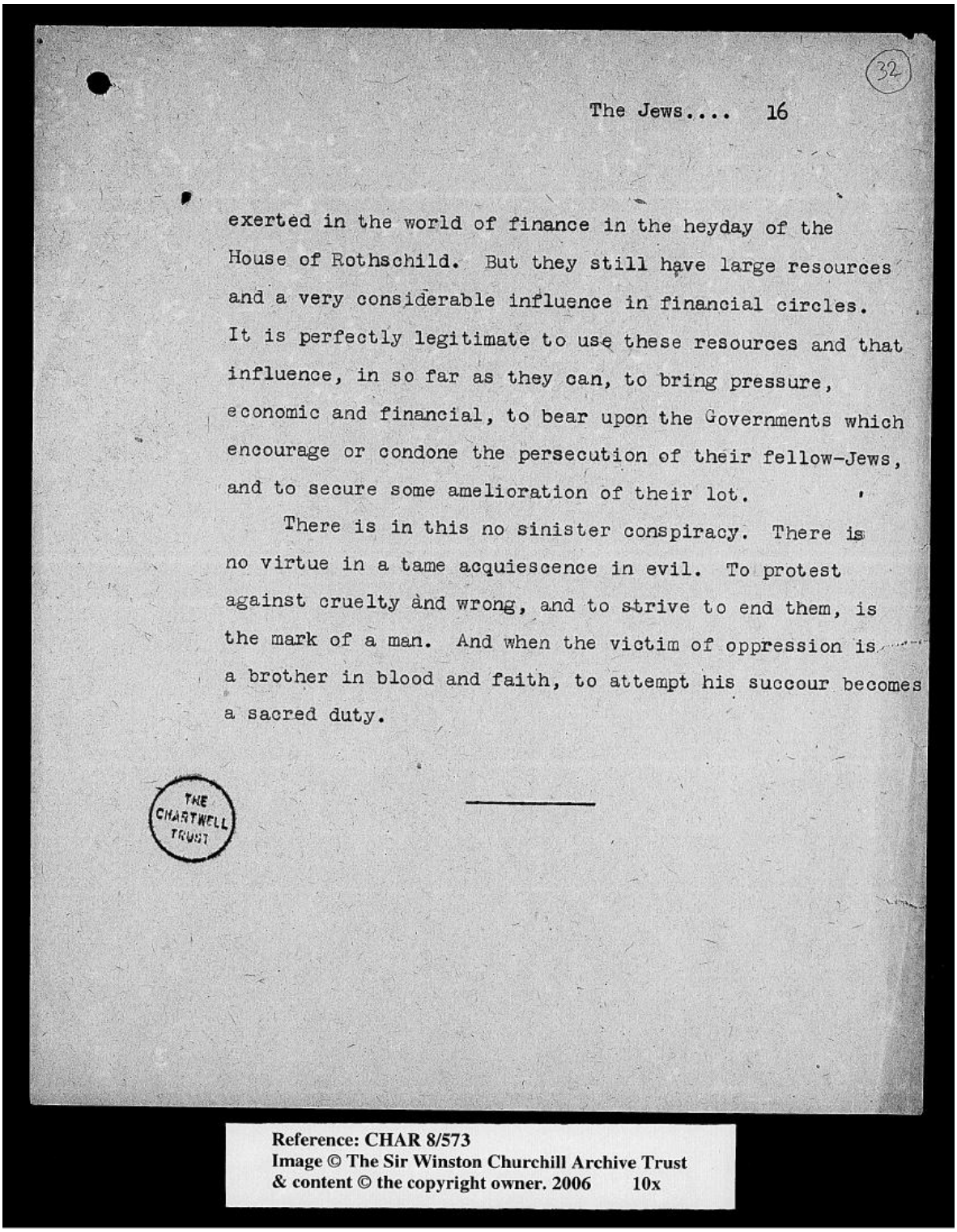

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The Jews.... 16

exerted in the world of finance in the heyday of the House of Rothschild. But they still have large resources and a very considerable influence in financial circles. It is perfectly legitimate to use these resources and that influence, in so far as they can, to bring pressure, economic and financial, to bear upon the Governments which encourage or condone the persecution of their fellow-Jews, and to secure some amelioration of their lot.

There is in this no sinister conspiracy. There is no virtue in a tame acquiescence in evil. To protest against cruelty and wrong, and to strive to end them, is the mark of a man. And when the victim of oppression is a brother in blood and faith, to attempt his succour becomes a sacred duty.

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